

Executive Summary

Overview of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000

This paper provides an overview of changes to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) due to the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA Amendments), signed into law on November 13, 2000. The Older Americans Act is the major vehicle for the organization and delivery of supportive and nutrition services to older persons, authorizing funding for programs including SCSEP, Meals on Wheels, elder abuse prevention activities, and a new National Family Caregiver Support Program.

SCSEP, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, is the only Federally sponsored job creation program targeted to low-income older Americans. The program subsidizes part-time community service jobs for low-income persons age 55 years and older who have poor employment prospects. Approximately 100,000 program enrollees annually work in a wide variety of community service jobs, including nurse's aides, teacher aides, librarians, clerical workers and day care assistants. Clearly, SCSEP benefits not only its program participants, but also the communities in which they serve. The Department of Labor allocates funds to operate the program to State agencies on aging and 10 national organizations.

As the baby boom generation ages, the demand for employment and training services and income support for low-income older persons will substantially increase. The Urban Institute projects that there will be 1.4 million more disadvantaged adults over the age of 55 in the year 2005 than in 1995. Low-income seniors generally must continue working, which will put added strain on workforce investment resources and the One-Stop system, which provides a single point of contact for job seekers and employers seeking information about local workforce development activities. The OAA Amendments require improved integration with the workforce investment system, which will not only support SCSEP reforms, but will also help the workforce investment system prepare for the greater number of older workers it will serve outside of SCSEP. One-Stops can benefit from the experience SCSEP has gained in serving this population.

SCSEP provisions of the OAA Amendments are designed to:

- Enhance employment and training opportunities for seniors by reinforcing connections with the broader workforce investment system;
- Establish an enhanced performance accountability system to hold each grantee accountable for attaining quality levels of performance with respect to core measures, such as customer satisfaction and placement in unsubsidized employment;
- Improve the ability of States to coordinate services, by providing for the broad participation of stakeholders in the development of an annual plan to ensure an equitable distribution of projects within the State;

- Strengthen administrative procedures by incorporating fiscal accountability provisions similar to the Workforce Investment Act, including definitions of administrative and programmatic costs and the application of uniform cost principles; and
- Revise the distribution of funding.